



Something new from FIA

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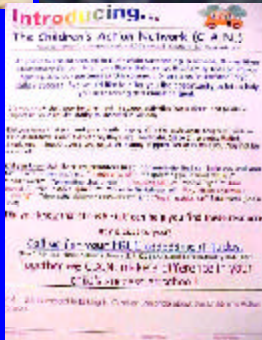
Today's big story

Family Resource Centers highlighted in State of State address

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm addressed the FIA's Family Resource Centers operating in elementary and middle schools during her Jan. 27 State of the State address, saying:



Shalonda James and Carol Larsen Roddy (above l-r) used a flyer like the one portrayed here to help spread the word about the Family Resource Center at Lansing's Grand River Elementary Magnet School.



"We've opened in-school **Family Resource Centers** in our neighborhood schools. These are Family Independence Agency offices right inside the school. No longer do we ask families to come to...some far away...office. Instead services are delivered where they are most convenient."

Working with other state agencies and local schools, the FIA established 17 Family Resource Centers in elementary and middle schools in Benton Harbor, Battle Creek, Flint, Lansing, Grand Rapids, Adrian, Mt. Clemens, Muskegon, Saginaw, Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park with more on the drawing board.

Family resource specialists Carol Larsen-Roddy and Shalonda James piloted a single family assessment tool last year at the Family Resource Center located at Lansing's Grand River Elementary Magnet School.

"The single assessment is customized for each family," said Larsen-Roddy. "(It) is direct and requires less time to complete and results in a plan of care for families. It does not intimidate the worker or the customer. It is truly a good instrument."

An informal survey of 18 Family Resource Specialists conducted in January indicates the centers are able to help access some services more quickly than before. The survey was done before centers in Wayne and Saginaw counties opened.

"Responses indicate Family Resource Center's are able to access services and housing more quickly," said Jocelyn Vanda, assistant to the FIA director, who developed the survey. "In addition, it appears that this model enhances parental involvement." Survey responses include:

- 62 percent of respondents said there was greater or much greater parental involvement.
- 67 percent said families have been able to obtain health care services more quickly.
- 73 percent of respondents said families have been able to obtain mental health services more quickly.
- Large majorities said it is too soon to assess the impact on attendance, tardiness and academic achievement.

Still, feelings are strong that the centers improve the delivery of services and that, in time that will extend to academic achievement. "I am very proud of the level of service our agency is providing to families at the Harrison Park School," said a Grand Rapids respondent. "This connection we have forged is the beginning of positive relationships and success for our families and their children."

For more information The centers are part of the governor's **Children's Action Network**, a network of services for children and families around the state. For information go to <http://www.michigan.gov/greatstart/> and click on the state map for services near you.

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Q: Why do we complete a FAP accuracy checklist on every FAP budget whether it is a change, application or redetermination when we are not allowed to put it in the case record? I understand we must clear our path in ASSIST but why do we have to print a copy every day and do case status reports and submit supporting documents along with daily activity work plans?

Denise M. Russell

Wayne County Hamtramck District

A: The checklist is part of Wayne County's Program Improvement Plan. Staff complete it when they are notified a case was selected for reading by a FIM, Quality Control, Technical Assistance Team, FAME, etc. The form goes on top of the case record and is forwarded to the FIM who removes the form, compares the information with the case record and either conducts a read or passes it on to an appropriate reader. We have requested the form not be included in the case record. The checklist is a monitoring tool to ensure the first line specialist has reviewed all error prone areas and has, to the best of his or her ability, ensured the accuracy of the case record. The goal is to ensure every party is accountable for actions related to case record accuracy.

Valerie Gordon

Wayne County Administration, Detroit

Q: Regarding Michigan Assistance and Referral Service located at www.mdch.state.mi.us/eAdvisor-Mars I'd like to refer callers that might be eligible and who don't want to go through the process to this pre-screening device, but only if it is fairly reliable. Is it reliable?

Jean Skalski

St. Joseph County FIA, Centreville

A: It is fairly reliable at this time and counties can refer people to it. However, it is slow and not very user friendly. We are working on revisions that will improve that.

Janet Strobe, Director

FIA Bureau of Family Independence Services, Lansing

Q: Disability Determination Service (DDS) is 100 percent federally funded. What possible cost savings could there be to furlough (DDS staff)? How does this fit in with the plan to value state employees?

Joseph Sloan

Disability Determination Service, Traverse City

What's your question about the FIA?

Send it to [FIA-Newsletter at michigan.gov](http://FIA-Newsletter.at.michigan.gov)

A: There are no state payroll savings as a result of DDS staff taking furlough days. However, all members of a bargaining unit are treated the same when it comes to employee concessions, regardless of funding source. The UAW members agreed to this concession plan.

Charles Jones, Director

FIA Office of Performance Excellence and DDS, Lansing

Q: Why do we continue to have contract employees and contract agencies as we ask state employees to reduce their hours and take furlough days? Couldn't state workers do that work?

Frank Buzzitta

FIA Division of Community Support Services, Lansing

A: We are meeting in mid-March to review contracts and to determine which ones can be brought in-house. In some instances the Legislature limits our flexibility to use state workers. We are proceeding on the premise that we will bring as many in as we effectively can.

Laura Champagne

Chief Deputy Director

Duty calls

FIA employee departs for service in Bosnia

Some people leave work to take a better job somewhere else, because they received a layoff notice, or to retire. Others leave to pursue personal goals, to get married, or to raise children. Others relocate. When someone leaves a work e-mail response like this – “I will be out of the office for military duty from 12-19-03 to 10-25-04...Hope to hear back from you in a few months” – well, you get the idea.

Miguel Sanchez, a trainer in FIA Bureau of Family Independence Services in Lansing, left at the end of the year to fulfill his military duty. A former Marine and member of Army National Guard, Sanchez departed for service in Tuzla, Bosnia where the U.S. maintains forces. He expects to be gone 10 months and return in late October. Sanchez will leave wife Stephanie, 15-year-old son Miguel and one-year-old daughter Gabriella in their Lansing home. An older child and grandson live elsewhere.



Miguel Sanchez

“Jan. 2 is when I’m officially on active duty,” he said. “I won’t step foot in Bosnia until late February. Until then I learn the language, how to drive over there and get inoculations.”

While there is public awareness of American military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, some have forgotten war-torn Bosnia where Eastern Orthodox, Christian (Catholic) and Muslim factions have been in conflict. Sanchez isn’t too worried about his service.

“I’m pretty good with it,” he said. “Given the (other military) options, there are worse missions out there. Even in Bosnia, where there are a million land mines, the military’s first thought is the lives of its soldiers. To my knowledge, the last actual U.S. soldier to die (in Bosnia) was four years ago in a traffic accident.”

Helping the troops have it their way

**From Cynthia Maritato, Acting Director
Monroe County Family Independence Agency
MaritatoC@michigan.gov**

Monroe County FIA staff members continue to support our troops. The Fun Things To Do Committee recently collected money to purchase Burger King Whopper value meals for our troops in Iraq. Participating Burger Kings are located inside U.S. military installations in Iraq. A \$4 donation serves one soldier in Iraq a Whopper, fries and a soft drink. A greeting card was signed with personal messages to the soldiers. We believe it would help boost troop morale and let them know they are appreciated, supported and remembered. Burger King gave each donor a sticker saying, “I sent a ‘taste of home’ to our troops.”



How did a 41-year-old family man end up like this – leaving a comfortable middle class job for service across an ocean?

“It all started with the need for money,” he said, talking about his first enlistment with the Marines in 1987. “I kept enlisting after that.” As you might imagine, there are feelings on the home front about his departure.

“My wife is feeling stressed – raising a one-year-old is the biggest concern she has,” Sanchez said. “My 15-year-old has been studying world wars (in school) and learned one of them (World War I) started because of an assassination in Bosnia.”

Sanchez said the family will suffer no financial loss during his departure and he may be able to videoconference with family while in Europe. “I’ll have the same job when I return,” he said. “The state will make up (the difference between his \$95 a day military pay and what he makes at his job in the FIA) and pay it to direct deposit” where his wife can access it.

How is Sanchez — whose coworkers threw a big going away party for him last Dec. 17 – anticipating his time away from home? “When I signed, there was a threat I would go off somewhere (like Bosnia),” he said. “I feel an obligation. I’ve been with them (military service) 17 years and feel it’s my time to do something.”

■ For more FIA employees and family members serving in the military go to FIA-Net “Employee Information” and click on “Recognition of Staff and Loved Ones Serving in the Military”.

Keep this in mind if you send Miguel an e-mail message and get that response over the next eight months.

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

Correction

FIA children's services specialist **Mark Jewell** was incorrectly identified as Mark Newell in the Feb. 27 issue. Sorry about that, Mark! We apologize for the mistake.

Date: March 3
To: Andrew Zylstra, Director
Kent County Family Independence Agency, Grand Rapids
Subj: Commendations

The Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO) would like to recognize Kent County CPS workers for commendable work on behalf of the children. The OCO recently investigated complaints relating to Kent County FIA's handling of CPS complaints concerning children. We concluded our investigations and submitted letters to complainants affirming the actions of Kent County FIA in investigating over 20 CPS complaints beginning in 1997. After review of the case materials, we felt compelled to issue separate letters

acknowledging the exemplary work completed by (these staff persons and supervisors): **Scott Orr** under supervision of **Michael Brown**, **Gene LaNore** under supervision of **Mary Heikkinen**, **Todd Myers** and **Rodney Steed** under supervision of **Michael Deerfield**, and **Joseph Sawicki** under supervision of **Carol Kehoe**. The OCO was impressed with the thorough manner in which (these specialists) gathered and documented previous case history in addition to contacting previous service providers for information regarding family functioning. Documentation verifying proper use of the Forensic Interviewing Protocol was comprehensive with good follow-up questions when inconsistencies presented themselves during the interview. Interviews with all involved parties were detailed, providing (FIA staff) with a wealth of information regarding family dynamics, strengths and possible weaknesses. Overall, the documentation was methodical and easily led the reader to a conclusion that expertly extricated the presenting issues. It has been a pleasure to observe their excellent work.

Lynn Martinez

Children's Ombudsman

■ *This is a composite of five letters. The Office of Children's Ombudsman investigates complaints about children served by CPS, foster care and adoption services. The Kent County staff members are social services specialists and managers. FIA Office of Family Advocate submitted this letter for publication.*

Date: March 2
To: Sandra Weingart, Community Resources Coordinator
Jackson County Family Independence Agency, Jackson
Subj: My case worker

My case worker, **Brian Burgess**, does a great job of trying to get the help needed in as short a wait as any worker I've ever had. He does a great job very respectfully and courteously. Thanks for all your help and patience!

Betty Price

Jackson

■ *Brian Burgess is an eligibility specialist for Jackson County FIA.*

To submit a customer letter for publication

1. Ensure your supervisor knows about this and approves.
2. Have the customer sign **Consent for Publication** form, which is downloadable from the MS Word template as form **0199.dot**
3. Send the letter and a copy of the signed consent by e-mail to **FIA-Newlsetter@michigan.gov** or by fax to Office of Communications at (517) 373-8471.
4. Keep the original consent form in customer file.
5. Include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of the employee(s) cited in the letter.

● *Don't forget to send in your proposed newsletter names, too! We'll publish some of them next time.*

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is a product of Michigan's
Family Independence Agency
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Karen Smith, Director
Office of Communications
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Submit stories & letters by e-mail to:
FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Date: Dec. 17, 2003
To: Lural Baltimore, Area Administrator
Disability Determination Service, Lansing
Subj: Donation

The staff members at **Disability Determination Service** have made a generous donation to SIREN/Eaton Shelter in your name. The donation was earmarked for holiday gifts for the 15 teens living in our shelter with their parents. Being in a shelter setting is particularly hard on teens and it was very kind of your staff to brighten their holidays with this gift. We greatly appreciate their support and interest in our services to homeless families and domestic violence survivors. Please accept our best wishes.

Nancy Oliver, Director

SIREN/Eaton Shelter, Charlotte

■ *Lansing-based DDS staff donated \$576 to the shelter and raised \$2,822 that was divided equally in gifts to The Salvation Army and Toys for Tots campaign.*